

News Release



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"Small Wonders: The Magic of Toy Trains" is Most Comprehensive Exhibit of its Kind in the Nation

Small Trains Make Big News At State Parks' Railroad Museum

SACRAMENTO – The California State Railroad Museum will make railroad history – on a small scale – when it debuts on Saturday, August 14, 2004, America's most comprehensive toy train exhibit, "Small Wonders: The Magic of Toy Trains."

While the individual pieces may be tiny in size, the elaborate collection features more than 7,000 twentieth century toy trains and Buddy "L" riding toys, many of which are quite rare and others considered priceless. Collected over many decades by toy train expert, discerning collector and enthusiast Thomas W. Sefton, the prized collection was donated to the Museum in late 2001.

"When expert collectors examine these remarkable pieces, they are amazed to find the exquisite items have not been restored or repainted in any way," said Bruce Stiny, curator of toy trains and scale models for the Museum that is operated by California State Parks. "Thomas W. Sefton was indeed a gifted and dedicated collector who managed to amass a world-renowned collection that we now proudly share with toy train enthusiasts of all ages."

In addition, a sizable one-time cash gift was donated to the Museum for transporting, storing and organizing the collection, and building a gallery suitable to display the artifacts for the world to enjoy. Named after the esteemed collector and donor, the 3,300 square-foot Thomas W. Sefton Gallery is located on the second floor of the Museum.

"We are extremely proud and thrilled to offer such an exciting new gallery and exhibit for our Museum guests," said Museum Director Cathy Taylor. "There is something absolutely magical about toy trains that taps into the child in each of us. We look forward to hosting enthusiasts from every corner of the world."

Given the sheer volume of the collection, only a portion will be on display at any one time, allowing for a regularly updated presentation to delight train enthusiasts time and again. With a number of interactive elements with audio and visual components, the layout of the exhibit features six major themes, including: "Exhibit Introduction," "Collector's Attic," "Toy Trains 101," "Lionel City," "Operating Layout" and "Toy Trains For Everyone."

The new Thomas W. Sefton Gallery and the "Small Wonders: The Magic of Toy Trains" exhibit are both permanent additions to the Museum, which is located in Old Sacramento State Historic Park. Widely regarded as America's most popular railroad museum, the California State Railroad Museum is part of the California State Park system.

Operated by California State Parks with financial assistance from the nonprofit California State Railroad Museum Foundation, the California State Railroad Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Widely regarded as North America's finest and most-visited interpretive railroad museum, the complex of facilities includes the 100,000-sq.ft. Museum of Railroad History plus the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station and Freight Depot, 1849 Eagle Theatre, and Big Four and Dingley Spice Mill buildings in Old Sacramento. For 24-hour info, visit www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org or call (916) 445-6645.

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